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Ag. History Center Gets \$11 Million

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Mark Hebert

The state of Kentucky is shelling out \$11 million to build an Agriculture Heritage Center in Mercer County. Any thoughts on this project and spending? Here's the release from the Governor's office:

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Governor Steve Beshear Presents \$11 Million to the Kentucky Agriculture Heritage Center

Center will help preserve and promote Kentucky's agricultural heritage

July 2008

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FRANKFORT, Ky. (July 16, 2008) - Gov. Steve Beshear today presented the Kentucky Agriculture Heritage Center a check for \$11 million in Kentucky Agricultural Development Funds for the architectural design development, marketing, promotion and construction of the facility.

"The Kentucky Agriculture Heritage Center will benefit all Kentuckians by educating rural and urban consumers on the importance of our rich agriculture history and our growing economy," said Gov. Beshear. "This will insure Kentucky's farming and rural heritage is not lost by the changing landscape of our agricultural industries."

The Kentucky Agriculture Heritage Center is a broad based, grass roots project whose purpose is to preserve and promote Kentucky's agricultural heritage. It will be located on 50 acres of prime Kentucky farmland at Anderson Circle Farm in Mercer County. The Center will showcase technology and provide work spaces and resources for agricultural organizations and interest groups. It will also include educational resources, recreation activities and entertainment while being the centerpiece for agricultural growth and development. Kentucky's rich agricultural history will be displayed at the Center through hands-on activities such as a walking farm tour, demonstrations, expositions and virtual agriculture experiences.

The Kentucky Agricultural Development Board, chaired by Gov. Beshear, approved the Kentucky Agriculture Heritage Center for \$1 million in state funds for the market development study as well as the architectural design, development, marketing and promotion of the Center. The Kentucky Agriculture Heritage Center received a \$10 million line item appropriation in the 2009-2010 Executive Branch Budget. This appropriation is in the form of a bond that will be paid off over the next 20 years, and the first year debt service will be paid with proceeds from the Kentucky Agricultural Development Fund.

Gov. Beshear and the Kentucky Legislature continue to make great strides toward lessening Kentucky's dependence on tobacco production while revitalizing the farm economy by investing 50 percent of Kentucky's Master Settlement Agreement into the Kentucky Agricultural Development Fund. To date, Kentucky has invested more than \$264 million to an array of county, regional and state projects designed to increase net farm income and create sustainable new farm-based business enterprises. The diversification programs represent more than 3,000 projects that have been funded through Agricultural Development Fund, since the

inception of the program in January 2001.

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